

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
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INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
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AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 0507

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, JO, IS
SUBJECT: JORDAN-PALESTINIAN RELATIONS

REF: AMMAN 0498

SUMMARY: MINISTER OF INFORMATION TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT
JORDAN USED VISIT OF EX-HEBRON MAYOR TO WHIP PLO AND
WEST BANKERS INTO RECOGNIZING JORDAN'S IMPORTANCE TO
WEST BANK. WHILE ARABS MUST HELP MAKE PLO LEADERSHIP
MORE REPRESENTATIVE OF ALL PALESTINIANS, ISRAELIS MUST
UNDERSTAND SUCH NEW WINE MUST KEEP OLD BOTTLE OF PLO
NAME FOR REASONS OF ARAB PSYCHOLOGY. SIMILARLY, ARABS
FOR REASONS OF FACE CANNOT BEGIN PEACE PROCESS BY
COMPROMISING WITHDRAWAL POSITION OR RABAT PRINCIPLES.
ODEH GOT ON WELL WITH FAHUM DURING LATTER'S RECENT
AMMAN VISIT, BUT ODEH FOUND PLO LEADERS NAIVELY
IGNORANT OF US AND ITS POLICIES, ESPECIALLY RE WIDE-
SPREAD AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION AGAINST PLO. ODEH
THINKS GOJ-PLO DIALOGUE WILL USEFULLY EDUCATE PLO ABOUT
REAL WORLD. ODEH APPRECIATES RISKS TO JORDAN OF PRESENT
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CONDITIONS OF FLUX IN REGION, BUT BELIEVES TIMES CALL
FOR SOME JORDANIAN INITIATIVE. END SUMMARY.

1. AMBASSADOR HAD SESSION WITH MINISTER OF INFORMATION
ODEH AT WHICH SOME POINTS MADE ADDITIONAL TO REFTEL.
ODEH STATES QUITE FRANKLY THAT JA'ABARI VISIT WAS
CONCEIVED OF AS A "WHIP" TO STIMULATE PLO INTEREST IN

JORDAN AND TO SHOW WEST BANKERS THAT TREND OF EVENTS NOT ALL TOWARD PLO. ODEH BELIEVES IN THE FUTURE THERE MUST BE AN EVOLUTION IN THE AREA WHICH WILL HELP TO DISTINGUISH THE "PALESTINIANS" AS A MASS FROM THE PRESENT PLO LEADERSHIP. THE ARABS WILL OVER TIME HAVE TO ASSIST IN CHANGING THE PLO LEADERSHIP TO BE MORE BROADLY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PALESTINIANS, INCLUDING MODERATE VOICES IN PARTICULAR FROM THE WEST BANK AND THE EAST BANK. ODEH ADDED, AS HE IS WONT TO DO, THAT THE ISRAELIS MUST UNDERSTAND ARAB PSYCHOLOGY AND THAT THE PLO, WHATEVER ITS FUTURE FORM AND SUBSTANCE, MUST KEEP THE SAME NAME. BY THIS WE ASSUME HE MEANS THAT THE PLO CANNOT BE REPLACED, BUT CAN BE SHAPED, MOULDED AND MODIFIED IN A WAY WHICH IS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FORCES HE NAMED.

2. ODEH PARTICULARLY STRESSED THE NEED OF THE ARABS TO MAINTAIN "FACE" OVER THE ISSUE OF THE PLO AND FACT THAT NO ARAB GROUP WOULD BACKTRACK ON DEMANDS FOR FULL WITHDRAWAL OR ABROGATE THE RABAT DECISIONS, EVEN THOUGH THEY MIGHT OVER TIME WORK AROUND THE DECISIONS TO THE POINT WHERE THEY NO LONGER RESEMBLED THEIR ORIGINAL FORM.

3. WHEN KHALID FAHUM AND HANI HASSAN WERE HERE, ODEH MET WITH THEM TOGETHER. FAHUM HE GREW TO LIKE AND THE TWO HAVE AGREED TACITLY TO KEEP IN TOUCH ON ODEH'S TRIPS TO DAMASCUS. ODEH SAID HE WAS SHOCKED BY THE IGNORANCE OF THE US AND ITS POLICIES DEMONSTRATED BY FARHUM AND THE

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OTHER PALESTINIANS WHICH WHOM HE MET. (ODEH JUST RETURNED LAST YEAR FROM A YEAR AT THE HARVARD INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE FELLOW PROGRAM.) THEY NEVER HAD HEARD OF THE "BROOKINGS REPORT". HE GOT THEM A COPY. FOR TWO HOURS THEY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE US. THEY DID NOT SEEM TO REALIZE THAT US VIEWS OF THE PLO, HE SAID, WERE DEEPLY ROOTED IN THE ATTITUDES OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC. THEY THOUGHT THE US WAS ABOUT TO OR INDEED HAD, CHANGED ITS APPROACH ON THE ATTENDANCE OF THE PLO AT GENEVA AND THAT THE US HAD ONLY TO SNAP ITS FINGERS AND THE ISRAELIS WOULD ACCEPT THE PLO. HE SEES A GREAT DEAL OF EDUCATIVE WORK AHEAD AND BELIEVES A JORDAN-PLO DIALOGUE CAN CONTRIBUTE MUCH.

4. ON THE DIALOGUE AND JORDAN'S ROLE IN THE PEACE PROCESS, ODEH, IN A TYPICAL COLORFUL SIMILE, SAID THE JORDANIAN APPROACH TO THESE POINTS SHOULD BE LIKE THT OF THE ARAB BRIDEGROOM TO THE NUPTIALS, SLOW AND DELIBERATE, BUT ALWAYS CAREFULLY MOVING

FORWARD. HE SAID IN SUMMARY THAT HE SEES THE
PRESENT A TIME OF GREAT CHANGE AND RISK AND ONE IN
WHICH CARE AND SENSITIVITY IS REQUIRED IN HANDLING
THE POLICIES. HE EXPECTS TO APPLY THIS VIEW TO
HIS DEALINGS WITH THE WEST BANK, ACCEPTING APPROACHES
AND RESPONDING, BUT KEEPING OUT OF A FORWARD EFFORT.
HE TOO IS WORRIED ABOUT JORDAN'S ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY
FOR PEACE NEGOTIATIONS AND MAKING ALL THE COMPROMISES,
BUT BELIEVES THAT A DIALOGUE WITH THE PLO COULD HELP
TO RESOLVE THIS IN A WAY WHICH CAN PROTECT SOME OF
THE KING'S INTERESTS.
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